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Czechoslovakia

SUBJECT

Investigation of Czechoslovak Leaders

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1. On 26 Dec 53, P. N. Pospelov, member of the secretariat of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party and A. B. Aristov, chairman of the security department of the Central Committee, arrived in Prague to continue the investigation of Czechoslovak Communist leaders begun in Oct 1953 by N. I. Semenov, secretary of Embassy in Prague. They were under the orders of K. F. Luney, Soviet First Deputy Minister of the Interior.
2. This investigation was touched off by the capture of Col. Jan Bojko at Cesky Krumlov in South Bohemia on 19 Dec 53. Bojko was a close collaborator of Gen. Bedrich Reicin, executed during the purge of the Slansky group. Bojko, a Slovak, generally believed dead, had actually been concealed by Slansky's followers and was detected trying to reach Austria on the way to Yugoslavia with important documents.
3. His capture revealed a conspiracy involving the highest circles of Communist leadership and increased Soviet suspicion with regard to Czechoslovak unwillingness to purge unreliable elements. Soviet authorities have placed the responsibility on Dr. Stefan Reiss, former Minister of Justice, a Hungarian Jew by birth, but considered a Slovak. He is a protégé of President Zapotocky.
4. With a view to avoiding further inquiries the Czechoslovak government decided on 22 Dec 53 to place on trial Gustav Husak and Laco Novomesky, former Slovak ministers and friends of Dr. Vlado Clementis, who have been in prison since 1951. Due to the political tension in Slovakia the Prague Government has long hesitated to place the two men on trial. This hesitation has been adroitly exploited by Karol Bacilek, a Slovak, who was ousted from the government on 15 Sep 53. Now secretary general of the Slovak Communist Party, Bacilek is struggling for reintegration

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in the government at the expense of Viliam Široký, himself a Slovak.

5. Bacílek denounced the slowness of the government in bringing Husák and Novomeský to trial to J. B. Beryezin, Soviet Consul General in Bratislava, and Beryezin initiated the Oct investigation of Czechoslovak leaders.
6. The Kremlin is profoundly dissatisfied with Zápotocký, who has officially been declared ill for some weeks. The disclosures on the arrest of Bojko involve very important issues. It is considered that the next president must be a Slovak, and Široký, Bacílek and Julius Dúriš are all candidates, while Dr. František Zupka is expected to succeed Gustav Klíment as head of the syndicalist organization URO (Central Labor Union Council).
7. The result of the investigation is expected to shake further Zápotocký's position, and the government would then fall into the hands of Slovaks at the very moment when it would become necessary to execute Husák and Novomeský. There is great anxiety in Prague.

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